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ABSTRACT

Intended for use by college basic speech communication course directors and teachers, the course described in this paper is based on the model of communication competency developed by R. R. Allen and K. L. Brown. The first section of the paper presented a brief discussion of the model, which defines a competent communicator as one who is capable of selecting from a wide range of verbal and nonverbal behaviors (controlling, feeling, informing, ritualizing, and imagining behaviors) those that he or she perceives to be the most appropriate for the specific situation and time. The remaining sections of the paper contain (1) additional definitions of communication competence, (2) definitions of the communication functions, (3) an exercise calling for the application of the different functions to specific situations, (4) a discussion of the elements of communication competence, (5) a communication function and classroom activity matrix, (6) guidelines for preparing activities for each function, and (7) sample activities illustrating each function. (FL)

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FUNCTIONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES AND BASIC SPEECH COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A SHORT COURSE

Abstract

Designed for basic speech communication course directors and teachers in higher education. Participants will: become familiar with a model of functional communication competence; analyze lessons for specific functions and specific competencies; explore application of the model to competency-based programs; and discuss the major problems in integrating the model into traditional courses and units.

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INTRODUCTION

While the exact nature of communication competence and the most effective process of developing competence have yet to be clearly indentified, a significant body of theory and research is emerging and provides a basic understanding of these issues (Backlund and Wiemann, 1978; Larson & others, 1978). Foremost in its contribution to this body of theory and research is the SCA National Project on Speech Communication Competencies. In their report of this project, Allen and Brown (1976) identify at least five functions which speech communication serves for the individual who uses language. These functions include: (1) Controlling; (2) Feeling; (3) Informing; (4) Ritualizing; and (5) Imagining. In addition, Allen and Brown characterize communication competence in terms of four principal features: (1) the availability of a wide repertoire of experiences and strategies; (2) the ability to select the appropriate strategy from the repertoire; (3) the ability and willingness to implement the strategy through use of verbal and nonverbal behaviors; and (4) the ability to evaluate the performance of the behaviors. In other words, a competent communicator is one who is capable of selecting from a wide range of verbal and nonverbal behaviors (controlling, feeling, informing, ritualizing, and imagining behaviors) those which he or she perceives to be the most appropriate for the specific situation and time. One must also be capable of evaluating one's own behavior "in terms of its appropriateness to the communication context and its interpersonal effectiveness-satisfaction to him/herself and others" (Allen and Brown, p. 249).

Despite the fact that most applications of this model of communication competence have been on the elementary and secondary level, by providing this Short Course we are expressing our belief that the model is equally applicable on the post-secondary level. For, as Wood (1977) explains:

> The difference in age is not in the presence or absence of these functional abilities, but in the levels of sophistication with which they employ communication acts. In terms of the four

> levels of competence, more experienced students (1) give more examples, give more ways of handling the communication in the activity (repertoire); (2) use a greater number of criteria and more appropriate criteria in selecting communication acts (selecting); (3) employ communication acts effectively in more varied contexts (implementating); and (4) make sounder judgments about the effectiveness of their communication acts (evaluation). (p. 8)

Our motivation behind this Short Course is based not only on the viability of the model, but also on the need to meet the post-secondary student at his or her entry level of communication competence and move him or her to a higher level. This need will become increasingly important as teachers in elementary and secondary education increase their application of the model.

In light of the foregoing, it is the goal of this Short Course to:

1. provide the participants with a greater understanding of the issue of communication competence, the related literature, and resources for identifying specific competencies.
2. suggest the Allen and Brown model and the related TRIP booklets as a viable model/vehicle for designing instruction to develop communication competence, and to illustrate how the model may be applied.

The material which follows is designed to illustrate the application of the model and will be discussed during the Short Course. The other Short Course instructors will be providing additional materials to illustrate the model and its application.

Definitions of Communication Competence

1. "The ability of an interactant to choose among available communicative behaviors in order that he may successfully accomplish his own interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of his fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation (Wiemann, 1977, p. 198)."

2. ". . . a person's ability to interact effectively with other people (Bochner and Kelly, 1974, p. 288)."

3. ". . . the ability to create and coordinate interpersonal systems (Harris, 1979, p. 32)."

4. ". . . the ability of an individual to alter his or her communication behaviors in order to affect another's attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs (Fogel, 1979, p. 15)."

5. ". . . the ability to demonstrate knowledge of the communicative behavior socially appropriate in a given situation (Larson, Backlund, Redmond, & Barbour, 1978, p. 21)."

6. "Communication competence. . . . is characterized by four principal features: (1) the exercise of competence depends upon an available repertoire of experiences; (2) it requires that the individual make critical choices from that repertoire; (3) it is revealed when suitable behaviors are brought to bear in performing desired tasks; and (4) it is sustained when individuals are able to evaluate their performance behaviors objectively--thereby enriching their repertoires of experiences (Allen and Brown, 1976, p. 248)."

COMMUNICATION FUNCTIONS

A number of theorists have sorted communication acts into broad categories of acts-sets of communication acts which are basically similar to each other in overall communicative purpose. The term "communication functions" is used to refer to these categories of communication purposes (acts).

CONTROLLING — These are communication acts in which the participants' dominant function is to control behavior; for example, commanding, offering, suggesting, permitting, threatening, warning, prohibiting, contracting, refusing, bargaining, rejecting, acknowledging, justifying, persuading and arguing.

FEELING — These are communication acts which express and respond to feelings and attitudes, such as, exclaiming, expressing a state or an attitude, taunting, commiserating, tale-telling, blaming, disagreeing, and rejecting.

INFORMING — These are communication acts in which the participants' function is to offer or seek information; for example, stating information, questioning, answering, justifying, naming, pointing out an object, demonstrating, explaining, and acknowledging.

RITUALIZING — These are communication acts which serve primarily to maintain social relationships and to facilitate social interactions, such as, greeting, taking leave, participating in verbal games (pat-a-cake) reciting, taking turns in conversation, participating in culturally appropriate speech modes (for example, teasing, shocking, punning, praying, playing the dozens), and demonstrating culturally appropriate amenities.

IMAGINING — These are communication acts which cast the participants in imaginary situations and include creative behaviors such as role playing, fantasizing, speculating, dramatizing, theorizing, and storytelling.

All communication functions involve both sending and receiving in conversations--a person both initiates and responds according to basic communication functions.

IDENTIFYING COMMUNICATION FUNCTIONS

Which function is the focus in each of the following communication situations?*

1. You are very upset because your students have not been keeping up with their reading assignments, despite your frequent pleas. In response, you threaten them with "pop quizes" if they aren't prepared for the next class period. The function of your behavior was _____.

2. You are not as comfortable in some social situations as you could be because you find it difficult to engage in "small talk." The function of this form of communication is best characterized as _____.

3. To prepare yourself for a job interview, you (and a good friend helping) "practice" answering all the questions you anticipate will be asked, as if the interview were actually taking place. The function of your behavior was _____.

4. Your chairman has asked you for a report on the debate team. In your response, you talk about how excited you are because of the excellent record the team has established. Your response is motivated by the _____ function.

5. A person you don't particularly like well has asked you to explain the basic operation of loading a new Olympus camera. Though you don't want to, you go through a step-by-step answer. The function of you behavior was _____.

6. Though you aren't that excited about seeing your colleague after a vacation period, you say "hey, good to see you again." The function of this communication is _____.

7. In relating a funny restaurant experience to your friend, you act out the ridiculous behavior of the waitress to show the humor of the situation. The function of your behavior was _____.

8. A "friend" let you down by breaking a confidence. While you find it extremely difficult to do this, you call her and let her "have it." The function of your behavior was _____.

*Controlling; Feeling; Informing; Ritualizing; Imagining

COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

When people work to develop communication competence they are concerned with "putting language to work" for them in the following ways: (1) enlarging their repertoire of communication acts: (2) selecting criteria for making choices from the repertoire; (3) implementing the communication acts chosen; and (4) evaluating the effectiveness of communication employed.

REPERTOIRE OF COMMUNICATION ACTS

To be effective communicators individuals must be flexible actors. They must be able to perform a range of communication acts required by the conversation, the people, the setting, and the task-at-hand. Our repertoire goal is to expand the repertoire of communication acts which individuals can employ in communication situations.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Communication effectiveness is based on the appropriateness of what people say. The competent communicator carefully weighs the factors of the communication situation: (1) the participants--the people involved in communication; (2) setting--the time and place of the communication event; (3) topic--the subject matter of communication; and (4) task--the goal or purpose of communication. Our selection goal is to provide an opportunity for students to identify and sharpen the criteria they use in choosing communication acts.

IMPLEMENTING CHOICES

Once people have made communication choices for a particular situation, they must possess skills to carry their choices into action. If they have decided that a carefully phrased suggestion, coupled with several justifications, is appropriate for a sister who is in a real jam, they must be prepared to execute that communication plan. Our implementation goal is to offer students a variety of situations helpful in giving them practice in implementing their choice or choices of communication acts in situations.

EVALUATING COMMUNICATION

People must evaluate their communication in terms of its appropriateness to the communication context and its satisfaction to themselves and others. Judgments of message effectiveness use feedback from others as well as information from personal experiences. By evaluating each encounter in terms of appropriateness and satisfaction, we gain valuable information (criteria) for future conversations with others. The evaluation goal, then, is to provide opportunities for students to sharpen their critical awareness of self and others in moments of communication interaction ("Did my plan work?" "What would probably happen?" "How did the other person probably feel?").

Communication Competence

While communication competence has four principal features--repertoire, selection, implementation, and evaluation--this does not mean that it has four steps in an ordered sequence. All aspects of competence are operative in every moment of communication. Rather, each of these four aspects provides a different focus for viewing the development of the student's communicative competence--that is, each focuses attention, pedagogically, on different kinds of instruction intervention.

COMMUNICATION FUNCTION AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITY MATRIX

	Feeling	Controlling	Ritualizing	Imagining	Informing
Intrapersonal	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-
Dyadic	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-
Small Group	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-
Public	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-
Mediated	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-	R- S- I- E-

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING ACTIVITIES

Below are the kinds of questions one should ask about an activity to be used for developing communication competence. The more all of the questions can be answered positively, the more effective should be the activity in developing the students' communication competence.

1. Repertoire

   Does the ACTIVITY provide an opportunity for the students to observe a range of communication behaviors (acts) relevant to the objective of the activity? (Within limits, the wider the range of relevant behaviors they can observe, the better.)

   Does the DISCUSSION/FOLLOW-UP help the students identify the behaviors (verbal and nonverbal) which were used to communicate the message and identify the behaviors which were not used but could have been?

2. Selection

   Does the ACTIVITY provide an opportunity for the students to select behaviors they judge as appropriate for the situation?

   Does the DISCUSSION/FOLLOW-UP help the students understand why the behaviors were selected and why other behaviors were not selected? That is, do the questions help the students identify how such factors of the communication setting as the participants, the setting, the topic, and the goal of the message influence the choice of behavior?

3. Implementation

   Does the ACTIVITY provide an opportunity for the students to implement the behaviors they have selected?

   Does the DISCUSSION/FOLLOW-UP provide the students with an opportunity and encourage them to implement their selected behaviors? (This is especially important if the activity did not require implementation, if all students did not have an opportunity to implement during the activity, or if some students selected not to implement. When possible and appropriate, each student should have some opportunity to implement his/her personally selected behaviors, either during the activity or during the "Discussion/Follow-up.")

4. Evaluation

   Does the ACTIVITY provide a sufficient basis for the students to make sound judgments about the effectiveness of their communication behavior? (The wider the range of behaviors revealed through the activity and the more opportunity the activity provides to implement and select, the stronger should be the basis for the students' evaluations.)

   Does the DISCUSSION/FOLLOW-UP provide the students with an opportunity to objectively evaluate their behavior, including the appropriateness of their criteria for selection and the effectiveness of their implementation?

Guidelines continued

The perspective implied by the foregoing questions suggests that the best activity is usually that which enables at least several, if not all, of the students to perform behaviors relevant to the objective of the activity. Performance requires selection and implementation. Without performance, the students will be unable to evaluate their <u>own</u> selection and implementation of behaviors.

However, this does not eliminate activities (e.g., modeling) in which the students merely observe others (via film, video-tape, reference to personal experiences, etc.). On the contrary, these kinds of activities can be very useful for expanding the students' understanding of criteria for selecting and implementing certain behaviors, especially behaviors which may be threatening to the student.

Regardless of the objective and nature of the activity, its value will be significantly limited if <u>evaluation</u> is not built in. While it is probable that the students will automatically make individual judgments about the appropriateness of their behavior and that of others, including their selection and implementation, it is unlikely that the quality of the judgments will be as high as when they are made collectively and with guidance. Of greater importance, without evaluation there is even potential for the activity to be detrimental. The real danger is the potential for their individual, unvocalized judgments to be incorrect or incomplete, judgments which may lead them to become <u>less</u> competent communicators.

THE INTERVIEW

Primary Function: Informing

Secondary Function: Controlling, Ritualizing

Objectives: Performing and evaluating questioning behavior in the information interview.

Procedures: Appoint one or more dyads from the class. Give the dyad(s) 5-10 minutes to prepare for an in-class interview in which one member will conduct an interview with the other member in an area of his or her expertise. Have each dyad conduct the interview with the rest of the class observing.

Discussion/Follow-up:

1. Did the interviewer effectively open the interview? (E) Which behaviors were appropriate for opening the interview? (R,E) If any behaviors were inappropriate, what behaviors would have been more appropriate? (R,S,E) Why? (E)
2. Which of the following types of questions were not used effectively or could have been used more effectively? a. open, b. closed, c. primary, d. secondary, e. neutral vs. directed (E) How could they have been used more effectively? (R,S,I)
3. Did the interviewer effectively close the interview? (E) If not, what behaviors would have been more appropriate? (R,S)

Repertoire (R), Selection (S), Implementation (I), Evaluation (E)

PREVENTING AND RESOLVING CONFLICT

Primary Function: Controlling

Secondary Function: Feeling

Objectives" To identify methods for preventing and resolving conflict.

Materials: Copies of "The Case of Harold Samms, Student" (attached)

Procedures: Distribute the case to each student with instructions to read the case and select one of the seven alternatives on the back. They are not to discuss the case or their selection with other students at this time.

Select a group of five to seven students. Explain that the instructor decided to defer the decision on Harold Samm's case to a student committee, that they are the committee, and that they have twenty-five minutes to reach a consensus on one of the seven alternatives listed.

Prior to giving the foregoing directions, select at least one student in the group and secretly inform the student to select and defend alternative "six" or "seven" in an attempt to engender conflict. Perhaps the best approach is to select the confederate student prior to the class session and instruct him/her on the role.

Have the group move to the center of the room for their discussion, with the remaining students observing. End the discussion at the peak of the conflict and discuss the following:

Discussion/Follow-up:

1. What methods or strategies might be used to prevent conflict? (R) which would have been appropriate in this situation? (S,E)
2. Illustrate what one of the members of the group might have said or done to prevent conflict. (R,I)
3. What strategies might be used to resolve conflict? (R) Which would be appropriate for this situation? (S,E)
4. Illustrate what one of the members of this group might say or do to resolve the conflict. (R,I)

Repertoire (R), Selection (S), Implementation (I), Evaluation (E)

The Case of Harold Samms, Student*

Harold Samms is a senior in his last term and expects to graduate. He needs to pass every course this term in order to graduate. Harold is a member of a class in small group discussion. The work in this calss required that he attend all of the meetings of the class and prepare several papers and reports. Among them were the following: A journal of the activities of the laboratory periods where the class was involved in discussion of various topics; reports of his outside reading; a term paper on a subject of his choice; and a final open book examination which was to make an analysis of the various elements of leadership, problem solving, decision making, communication, etc., that developed over the term in the discussion laboratory.

Harold attended most of the class sessions and seemed to be a leader in the various discussions. His contributions were usually effective, and he performed with some skill in the various functions of discussion. He actually only missed two sessions during the term.

At the end of the term when the various papers were due, Harold handed in his journal and a term paper but no reading notes and no final exam. The journal and the term paper were above average work, and he received a B on each. For the final, however, Harold handed in a 15 page, single-space typewritten document in which he tried to justify why he should not write the examination. (Most examination papers ran about 10 pages.) The essence of his argument was that he felt the examination was not worthy of the time spent on it, was too detailed to be of any basic value, and that he had a right to refuse to do the examination on the grounds of his participation in the class which should be sufficient for a grade.

You are the teacher in this class. Which of the following atlernatives would you select as a proper action to take in Harold's case?

Select Only One Alternative

____ 1. Accept Harold's paper as an honest statement and count it in lieu of his regular examination.

____ 2. Call Harold in for a conference and ask him to discuss his concepts of the examination as a kind of oral examination. Give him his grade on that.

____ 3. Give Harold an Incomplete in the course until he submits the exam as requested.

____ 4. Allow Harold to withdraw from the course so that his record will not show any negative factor.

____ 5. Give Harold an Incomplete in the course with 30 days in which to complete the work. If at the end of 30 days he has not completed the final satisfactorily, he will receive a failing mark.

____ 6. Give Harold a D grade and let it go at that.

____ 7. Give Harold an F with no conditions attached.

*From Keltner, John W. Instructor's Manual for Interpersonal Speech Communication. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1970, p. 65-66.

FIND AND REMOVE THE BARRIER

Primary Function: Controlling

Secondary Functions: Informing, Feeling

Objective: Recognizing communication barriers (messages, responses, stimuli, etc., which inhibit effective communication) and selecting communication skills or strategies for enhancing communication.

Materials: Using materials similar to Chs. 3 and 5 of Verdeber's Communicate! (1978), develop a list of common barriers and corresponding skills for use by the students (see attached). Prepare a case study similar to "The Case of Anne Simms" (attached).

Procedures: Distribute and discuss the list of barriers and skills, or discuss those presented in your text. Distribute the case study. Divide the class into groups of 5-7 students each and give them 15-20 minutes to discuss the case study with the task of (1) identifying as many communication barriers as they can and (2) selecting skills appropriate for either preventing or overcoming each barrier. You may elect to have the students do an individual analysis either in or outside of class.

Questions/Follow-up:

1. What barriers did you perceive to be operating in the situation depicted in the case study? (E) How did these barriers inhibit effective communication? (E)
2. What strategies or skills were needed to prevent these barriers? (S,R)
3. What strategies or skills could have been used to overcome the barriers? (S,R)
4. Select students to role play portions of the case study illustrating how they would prevent or overcome the barriers. (S,I) Did the students select and implement the appropriate, or most appropriate, skills? (E)

Repertoire (R), Selection (S), Implementation (I), Evaluation (E)

Given a case study of a communication problem, identify and describe the barriers to effective communication and describe strategies for avoiding or overcoming the barriers.

Analyzing the Situation: In analyzing the situation, you will want to do the following:

First, you should refer to the place in the case study where each barrier occurred.

Second, you should accurately name the barrier you identified. For the most part, the barrier should be the same as or similar to those discussed in the reading material and summarized below:

1. Selective perception
2. Confusing facts and inferences
3. Transfer stations
4. Information overload
5. Noise
6. A gap
7. A hidden agenda
8. Defensiveness
9. Suspicion
10. Irrelevant response
11. An interrupting response
12. A tangential response
13. An incongruous response
14. An evaluative response
15. Conflict
16. Overreaction

Remember that these categories of barriers are not mutually exclusive.

Third, you should accurately explain how the named barrier is applicable to the situation you have identified.

Describing the Strategies for Avoiding the Problem: You should accurately describe strategies for avoiding or overcoming each barrier identified. For the most part, the strategy should be the same as or similar to one of the following sending or receiving skills:

1. Listening
2. Paraphrasing
3. Use of supportive statements
4. Questioning
5. Interpreting
6. Use of personal feedback
7. Separating fact from inference
8. Dating
9. Indexing
10. Using specific and concrete symbols
11. Describing feelings

THE CASE OF ANNE SIMMS

Ann Simms, thirty eight, had worked for the Bong Co., Inc. for fifteen years. For the last ten years she had served as a sales representative, accepting customer orders by phone. For several years Ann had aspired to a position of "field representative," a position which brought considerably more status and income. Harvey Haney, the sales manager, had assured Ann that, as senior sales representative, she would be given top consideration for the next available field representative position.

When Ann learned that Cecil Johnson, one of the field representatives, would be retiring in another six months, it appeared that her promotion was near. However, it had not occurred to Haney to reassure Ann the position was to be hers. Moreover, since Ann felt her superior should take the initiative, she did not seek reassurance from Haney.

As time passed, Ann became more and more uneasy. About two weeks prior to Johnson's retirement, Ann was shaken by the sight of Johnson escorting another man into Haney's office. Despite the closed door, Ann could hear the men laughing and joking inside. The three men finally came out of the office after more than an hour. As they were leaving, Haney shook hands with the new man, saying, "Bob, I'm sure you're going to get a good start at the business and am looking forward to working with you." As Johnson and the new man left, Haney returned to his office. Ann was beside herself. It was obvious to her that the new man was being hired for Johnson's position and why Haney had never talked with her. She immediately cleaned out her desk and wrote a biting letter of resignation. After throwing the letter on Haney's desk, she angrily ran out of the office.

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